

TWIN CITY LINES

Summer 2007





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The Minnesota Streetcar Museum operates the Como-Harriet Streetcar Line in Minneapolis and the Excelsior Streetcar Line in Excelsior. Its mission is to preserve Minnesota's electric railway heritage.

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TCL's HORIZONTAL FORMAT

Readers are undoubtedly wondering why this issue is laid out in a horizontal format. Your editorial staff believes we can bring you more content this way, and present it better.

This magazine is photo-based, and most streetcar photos are horizontal in format--they're wider than they are tall. It's a perpetual struggle to squeeze them into the conventional vertical magazine page. Also, it really limits the number of photos that can be run as front covers. Often we have to use a horizontal photo and crop it, not always the best idea.

The old format had three columns of text per page, and photos were usually presented in widths of one, two or three columns. Photo stories with little text always gravitated toward a very dull two-photos-per-page layout. The horizontal format uses four columns of text and photo widths can be more varied, permitting much greater layout flexibility and making for a better looking page. We hope you like it.

AN OPEN LETTER TO MINNEAPOLIS PATRONS

THANK YOU for your co-operation and patience during 1947. We realize the transportation service offered you was not perfect, but it was the best we had with the limited material and manpower at our disposal. Your patronage was generous and you made allowance for our problems.

OUR PROBLEMS were the shortage of equipment and available manpower, plus the most serious of all - mounting "peak loads." Traffic studies show that in place of easing off after war's termination, peak loads increased. This was mostly due to the abandonment of a war-time "staggered hour program" for workers. It is just impossible to transport everybody to and from work at the same time.

OUR PLANS call for providing our fellow citizens with the kind of service they deserve within the limits of prevailing conditions. The 90 new streetcars and 90 new buses we have been able to obtain are only the start of a program aimed at solving the mass transportation problems of our city. We feel that being frank with you will result in continuing to enjoy your full co-operation during 1948.



This newspaper ad appeared on January 4, 1948. 1947 ridership was just short of 200 million, higher even than the war years, so it's no wonder TCRT was promising expansion. 1948 ridership slipped to 188 million and the final decline had begun. For the rest of the story, see, John Diers' article, beginning on page 6.

Front cover: In 1952 TCRT posed this lineup on the east end of Snelling Station, presumably to demonstrate the progress from old to new. Next to a steel sided standard car and a PCC are 1947 Mack 35-foot bus #738 in the traditional Twin City Motor Bus two-tone green, and recently delivered GMC 40-footer #947 in the new red, cream and blue. Minneapolis Public Library collection.

Inside front cover: St. Louis Car Company shot this promotional view of a recently delivered PCC in front of the State Capitol. The year is 1947, and despite the beginnings of the post-war ridership slump, the purchase of PCCs reflects management's misplaced optimism about the future. This issue will explain how the streetcars gave way to buses, and will also tell how the tracks in this photo were relocated only 18 months before abandonment. Norton & Peel photo, MSM collection.

MSM NEWS SUMMARY

See *Streetcar Currents*
(www.trolleyride.org)
for the full story

Isaacs carbarn dedicated

On June 23, the carbarn at Lake Harriet was formally named for the late George K. Isaacs. A founder of the Como-Harriet line, Isaacs volunteered for 43 years. He participated in every aspect of the line's construction, including track, overhead and carbarns. He worked on every streetcar restoration. Most importantly, he helped shape the museum's culture, stressing high quality restorations, a clean shop and goodwill and cooperation among its members.

Car 1239's Centennial

Streetcar #1239 was completed on March 29, 1907. The centennial was celebrated on July 19th in conjunction with Excelsior Crazy Days.

New operators trained

In response to a shortage of streetcar operators, MSM members did some recruiting. The result was 13 new trainees, and their training is mostly complete. This brings the foreman, operator and station agent ranks to 98 total.

Museum membership reaches new high

Minnesota Streetcar Museum membership has been gradually growing, reaching a new high of 275 in July.

Grants for the Isaacs carbarn sprinklers

Since the last issue, the museum has received the following grants for the fire suppression system.

\$10,000 Onan Family Foundation

\$5000 20th Century Electric Ry. Foundation

\$1000 Linden Hills Neighborhood Council

As this is written, the carbarn sprinkler fund stands at \$32,000.

RAIL TRANSIT INSIDER

-John DeWitt

When it comes to light rail in the Twin Cities, there's good news and bad news. The good news is that we're still ahead of Detroit. The bad news is that we're rapidly falling behind virtually all of our peers. Cities like St. Louis, Dallas, Denver, San Diego, Los Angeles, San Jose, and Portland, Oregon are all operating fleets of 100-134 light rail vehicles, some four to five times larger than our 27 light rail vehicles.

Nonetheless, planning does continue of a number of lines. This column will track (pardon the pun) rail developments, starting with a baseline review of what's on the drawing board. This column will become a regular feature, covering the slow and not altogether sure progress of streetcars, light rail and commuter rail in the Twin Cities.

Streetcars

In 2005, Minneapolis began working on a 10-year Transportation Action Plan called Access Minneapolis. The goal was to develop a balanced, sustainable, multi-modal transportation system with special attention paid to the transit needs of the central business district. In 2006, Minneapolis

expanded Access Minneapolis to include a Streetcar Feasibility Study which was to define a network of future streetcar lines for the city. In addition, the study was to recommend several "starter" segments, that is, short segments that would minimize capital costs while maximizing success.

The study began by evaluating 14 lines, all of which were rail conversions (some total, some partial) of a proposed bus-based Primary Transit Network. Successive phases narrowed the 14 down to five proposed starter segments, all serving downtown Minneapolis. A number of knowledge-able advocates are fighting to include a streetcar line in the Midtown Greenway between Hiawatha and Uptown as a successful and cost effective "starter" line that would operate more like a light rail line. That corridor is the abandoned Milwaukee Railroad line that crosses Minneapolis just north of Lake Street. It was purchased by the Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority for use as a future light rail line and is currently hosts the very popular Midtown Greenway, a bicycle and pedestrian trail.

For more information about the project, visit: www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/public-works/trans-plan/TPProjects.asp and scroll down to "Streetcar Feasibility Study"

Light Rail

Hiawatha Corridor - Utility work has been completed on the four-block extension along 5th Street from the Warehouse Station to the future Northstar Commuter Rail Station and construction is underway. Some overhead poles are already in place. The Humphrey Terminal Station is temporarily closed for the construction of a new parking ramp that fills the open area between the station and the existing ramp. When completed this fall, it will provide an all-weather walkway between the station and Humphrey Terminal. The extra parking

capacity may also permit some parking spaces to be set aside for paid contract park-ride use.

Meanwhile, the 28th Avenue Station park-ride lot is being decked. When completed in 2008, its capacity will increase from 600 cars to 1450. Also on deck for 2008 is a new station at American Boulevard in Bloomington. This is actually an old station that was cut from the initial construction for budget reasons, but is now funded.

Central Corridor - This 11-mile line, which will connect downtown Minneapolis and St. Paul along University Avenue, is scheduled to be the next line built. It is hoped that construction will begin in 2010 and that operations will start in 2014. HDR has been awarded a contract to complete the final environmental impact statement by October 2008. And the Met Council is negotiating a preliminary engineering (PE) contract with DMJM Harris. The project cost needs to come down some \$200 million from its projected \$1 billion price tag in order to meet the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Cost Effectiveness Index and qualify for federal funding. It is anticipated that the FTA will contribute 50% of the cost, the state of Minnesota 33%, Ramsey County 12% and Hennepin County 5%.

PE will analyze a number of areas for potential cost savings. These include:

1. Tunnel under Washington Avenue at the University of Minnesota - approaching \$200 million - The U of M appears convinced that only a tunnel will work. But others believe that the U would be best served if Washington Avenue became a transit mall through the campus and there is some very creative thinking occurring around that idea.

2. Streetscaping along University Avenue - \$55 million - Making University a more pleasant street for pedestrians, transit riders and bicyclists

is an important amenity for the neighborhoods disrupted by construction and will be critical for the kind of redevelopment that is hoped for.

3. Extension to St. Paul Union Depot - \$72 million - With the help of \$50 million in funding provided by Congressman Oberstar, St. Paul and Ramsey County are eager to convert the Depot into a multi-modal transit hub. But that may be several years in the future and one option is to terminate the light rail line at Cedar meanwhile. When the depot becomes an active multi-modal hub the extension could be completed as was the Hiawatha extension to Northstar.

There are also a couple of wildcards: The FTA has suggested that 44 light rail vehicles (LRV) will be necessary to service the projected ridership while only 31 are planned. The 13 additional LRVs, longer platforms, power supply upgrades, and larger maintenance/storage facilities would cost an additional \$93 million. The FTA may be reacting to our region's inability to add capacity to Hiawatha even though rush-hour trains have been full for some time.

The Robert Street/University Avenue Alignment out of downtown St. Paul is raising some performance concerns. That alignment involves a 5% grade on Robert transitioning to a 5-6% grade on University after making a sharp turn. Low-floor LRVs with an unpowered center truck tend to be much slipperier than older streetcars like PCC cars. It is possible that LRVs would be unable to reliably make the climb out of downtown St. Paul during snowstorms and a single stalled LRV would tie up the entire corridor. An alternate route via 12th Street and Rice Street would encounter only a 3% grade.

The next phase will be Final Design which can't begin until some \$280 million of local funding is lined up. Legislators included \$40 million in this year's bonding bill which was vetoed by the Governor. In order to proceed with Final Design and

begin construction in 2010, the legislature will have to come up with the full amount next year which may prove difficult. One option being discussed is to use \$140 million in General Obligation (GO) bonding and another \$140 million backed by the Motor Vehicle Sales Tax (MVST) 40% of which is dedicated to transit following last November's election. There is some concern that we may see little construction funding until 2010 or later which would jeopardize the 2014 opening date.

For more information about the project, visit: www.metrocouncil.org/transportation/corridor/centralcorridor.htm

Southwest LRT Corridor – This line would connect downtown Minneapolis to Eden Prairie and is currently a Tier 2 project which means it is scheduled for the 2020-2030 time frame. The Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority (HCRRRA) is conducting a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) on three alignments: 1A, 3A and 3C. All three start near Hwy. 5 and Mitchell Road in Eden Prairie. 1A follows the former railroad right-of-way up to downtown Minneapolis where it will connect with the Hiawatha line at the Northstar Commuter Rail Station. 3A and 3C go through Eden Prairie's Golden Triangle and Opus office complex. Like 1A, 3A utilizes the Kenilworth Corridor between Lake of the Isles and Cedar Lake and connects to Hiawatha. Alignment 3C proceeds east though the Midtown Greenway to Nicollet Avenue where it enters a tunnel for access to downtown Minneapolis. 3C crosses but does not connect to Hiawatha. Minneapolis is also asking that HCRRRA include an alignment which uses the Midtown Greenway as far east as Park and Portland before turning north into downtown Minneapolis. The DEIS will select one of the alignments for further study.

Hennepin County is working to have the SW LRT Corridor moved into Tier 1 which would place construction in the 2010-2020 time frame.

For more information about the project, visit: www.southwesttransitway.org

Commuter Rail

Northstar Corridor – This commuter rail line, which runs from downtown Minneapolis to Big Lake, is scheduled to open in late 2009. The four-block extension of the Hiawatha light rail line to the commuter rail station is part of the project.

For more information about the project, visit: www.mn-getonboard.org/index.html

Other lines

For more information about a broad range of transit projects in our region, visit: www.tlcminnesota.org/Alternatives/Bus/bus_alternative.htm

AND THEN THERE WERE NONE

How TCRT converted from streetcar to bus

-John W. Diers

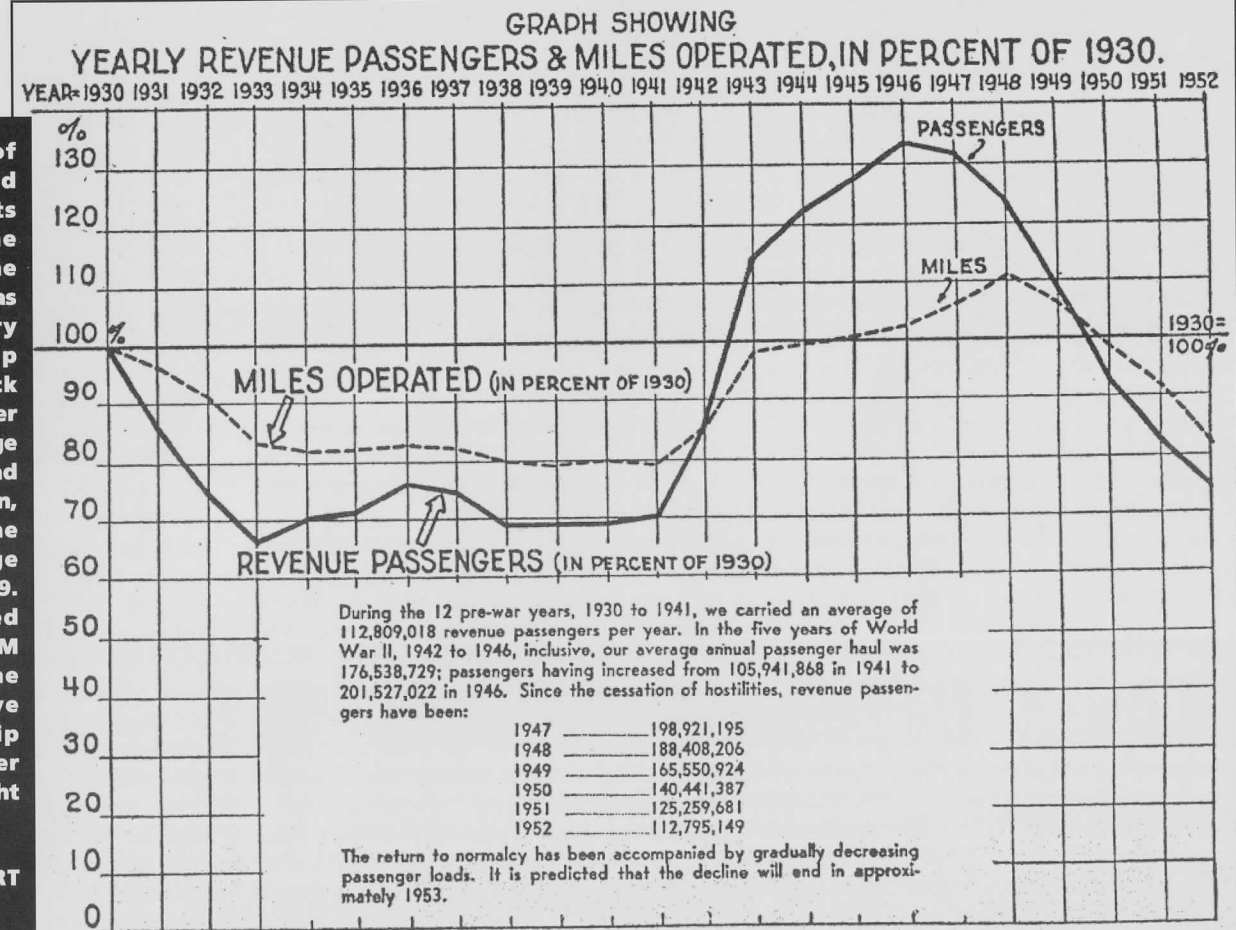
Today's auto dependent transportation system and the urban sprawl that feeds it reflect choices and decisions that were made in the early 1950's as returning GI's and their

families colonized the suburbs. Southdale, the country's first shopping mall, went on the drawing boards in 1952. That same year the Minnesota Highway Department was making plans for a network of expressways to deliver people and their automobiles to Southdale and all of the other shopping centers and subdivisions that would follow. Nowhere in all of this was there room for transit, much less streetcars that needed rails and wires to reach their destination.

TCRT took delivery of its first GM buses in 1952. By the end of the year it had largely banished streetcars from the streets of St. Paul. It would take two more years for the Ossanna

TCRT made gobs of money during World War II, because its passenger volume grew faster than the miles of service it was operating to carry them. Ridership dropped like a rock after 1946 but, rather than reducing mileage and expense as it had during the Depression, it added service. The result was a huge financial loss in 1949. Charles Green, Fred Ossanna and 525 GM buses followed. The company may have hoped its ridership would stabilize after 1953, but it kept right on sliding.

Source: 1952 TCRT Annual Report





THIRD ST LOOKING SOUTH STILLWATER MINN. RUNK-P-174

Two years after the streetcars quit running in 1932, a Twin City Motor Bus from St. Paul via Lake Elmo descends the 3rd Street hill into downtown Stillwater with the abandoned tracks still in place. This may have been the longest steep grade in the system, a sustained 7.5 percent. John Runk photo, Minnesota Historical Society collection.

management to wipe out TCRT's rail operations, and, although its motives were self-serving, and in the case of Ossanna and others, personally dishonest, their actions were enabled by a postwar prosperity and a culture that was largely built by, and dependent upon, the automobile. There was no interest in, or support for the streetcar.

Setting the Stage

The handwriting was on the wall as early as 1944 when TCRT hired Gilman and Company, a consulting engineering firm, to make a thorough study of the company and make recommendations for its postwar operations. Gilman found the property in superb physical and financial condition. Most of its wartime windfall

revenues had been used for debt reduction and maintenance.

The report predicted that ridership would fall by half to pre-war levels as automobile production resumed and gas and tire rationing ended. It recommended modest improvements at the main steam plant, but it also recommended that the company begin a gradual program of bus conversion to be accomplished over a period of 10-15 years. That time frame was consistent with the remaining useful life in TCRT's rolling stock and physical plant. There was no mention of rail expansion or PCC streetcars.

But company President D.J. Strouse and the TCRT Board took a different direction. It isn't known how their decision was made, or precisely what

they considered, because there are no surviving records of the meetings or discussions that preceded it. Strouse believed that the streetcar had a future in the TCRT system even though the company had extensive experience with bus operations and was aware of the flexibility and economies that buses offered. TCRT had used them for many years as feeders to its streetcar lines and on crosstown routes. It had also used them to transport large numbers of war workers to the New Brighton Army Ammunition Plant and had successfully converted several streetcar lines to buses before the outbreak of World War II. At the time of the Gilman report it owned 221 buses. In 1943 they carried 18,349,428 passengers (10.6 per cent of total ridership) at a cost of 20

cents per mile-compared to the 28 cents per mile for streetcars. Strouse was undoubtedly aware of the advances in bus technology and the fact that GM and Mack would be introducing high capacity diesel buses with automatic transmissions at the end of the War.

So why not fall in line with all the other transit systems that were ditching streetcars en masse in favor of the new diesel buses?

Streetcars are superior people movers. They are larger than buses and can carry more passengers in greater comfort than a forty-foot transit coach. The new PCCs accelerated faster than a diesel bus. Combine this greater carrying capacity and speed and the result is an operation that is actually more economical than the same operation with buses because fewer streetcars (and employees) are required to do the same amount of work. This was especially true of the smaller gasoline buses that were in general use in the 1920 and 30's. Even the newer diesels couldn't outperform a PCC. It's true that the track and the power and electrical distribution system and their ongoing maintenance added to the cost of rail operations, but as long as the passengers were there, and the infrastructure was in good shape, it made little sense to scrap it, and write off an investment that had several years of useful life. Strouse and his board of directors probably reasoned that much of the system would eventually convert to bus operation, as recommended in the Gilman report, especially when track and power infrastructure wore out and came due for renewal, but they also believed that certain heavy lines would continue to justify rail operation, hence their decision to order PCC streetcars and make other improvements to the rail system as part of the postwar modernization. What they could not foresee, and the Gilman report failed to project, was the postwar inflation and its spiraling costs, which, together with a



Several lightly patronized lines were converted to bus before World War II. Kenwood and St. Louis Park were combined into a single bus line in 1938, operated by these recently delivered Macks. The location is France Avenue at Lake Street.



Lightweight #2013 negotiates the Laurel and Upton wye at the west end of the Bryn Mawr line, which succumbed in 1939.

The redundant and poorly located Franklin Avenue line quit in 1940. It duplicated or crossed six other lines on its way downtown, then never actually got downtown, skirting its south edge on 11th Street. One of the ex-Stillwater short lightweights lays over at the 11th Street and Hawthorne terminus. 6th Avenue North was soon to be transformed into Olson Memorial Highway, obliterating this business district at Penn Avenue. TCRT decided the expense of rebuilding was prohibitive and switched to bus. All MSM collection.



Good idea or not, the public loved the new PCC cars. This is 7th and Wabasha in downtown St. Paul. St. Paul Pioneer Press photo

20% fall off in riders produced a loss of \$800,000 in 1949. TCRT faced other burdens. Both cities mandated that it maintain the street paving between its tracks and two feet on either side of its outermost rails. It was also expected to clear the streets of snow and sprinkle any that were unpaved. St. Paul

required that TCRT pay an annual license fee for any streetcar it operated within the city limits.

The table on page __, taken from a TCRT annual report, shows postwar ridership peaking at 201 million passengers in 1946 with steady declines thereafter. Regrettably, the company

didn't trim its service to match demand thereby reducing expense—a standard industry practice - but added mileage in an effort to attract riders. Ironically, much of that mileage came in the form of suburban bus routes that were added as feeders to the streetcar lines. But people didn't like to transfer and there

were the inevitable operational problems with missed connections. The company tried the park and ride concept on property that it already owned, but the lots were small and could only accommodate a few automobiles. As more people moved to St. Louis Park, Richfield, and Falcon Heights, DeSotos and Studebakers became the preferred way to get downtown—assuming, of course, that they even wanted, or needed, to go downtown. One of the area's first shopping centers, Miracle Mile, at Highway 100 and Excelsior Boulevard had only recently opened and was attracting shoppers that formerly frequented downtown stores. Jobs, too, were moving as businesses expanded and built new offices, warehouses, and manufacturing plants in the developing first ring suburbs.

Enter Charles Green

Charles Green was an appliance salesman turned Wall Street player who knew nothing about the street railway industry, but he had a sharp eye for value and an instinct for making money, and when he started buying TCRT stock he thought he had a winner.

TCRT had not paid a dividend in years. It successfully weathered the Depression by trimming operating expenses—getting rid of conductors on all but the heaviest lines, reducing service to match demand, and converting some of its weaker lines to bus operations. Among them were the Lake Minnetonka and Stillwater Lines in 1932, the Cedar Avenue shuttle in 1933, the Kenwood, St. Louis Park, Jackson-South Robert and Hope Street lines and the Merriam Park shuttle in 1938, the Bryn Mawr line in 1939, Franklin-11th Street and 6th Avenue North lines in 1940, and Western Avenue in 1941.

In the case of the suburban lines, development had not reached Lake Minnetonka and Stillwater. They were still largely rural areas. That and



By the late 1940s, Lake Street Station was housing both streetcars and buses.



Above: Twin City Motor Bus Garage #1 on Currie Avenue in downtown Minneapolis was itself a casualty of the streetcar-bus conversion. It was closed in favor of the much larger ex-carbarns.

Left: Only months before it was scheduled to be abandoned, the Como-Harriet line bridge over 36th Street by Lake Calhoun was hit by a truck. Crews had to repair the bridge to restore car service.

improved roads and the effects of the Depression resulted in a loss of riders. Moreover, much of the track and power infrastructure was over twenty-five years old and would require renewal. The local lines that were converted to

buses had similar issues. In the case of the St. Louis Park Line, the City of Minneapolis had plans to widen and improve Lake Street on the north side of Lake Calhoun, and 6th Avenue North was about to become Olson Memorial



One of the early conversions, in August 1950, eliminated the 28th Avenue S. line south of 42nd Street, and the 34th Avenue S. line north of 42nd. The two lines had met at the intersection of 42nd Street and 28th Avenue, where each turned without touching the other. The remaining segments were combined by straight-railing the tracks on 42nd Street, shown underway here.





Newly delivered GMC buses at North Side Station. TCRT photo.

Highway. TCRT had no money or interest in rebuilding its tracks to accommodate these improvements.

All of this frugality put TCRT in an excellent position to handle the World War II crowds, and it confronted the post war era with a fat treasury, minimal debt, and a physical plant and rolling stock that were in remarkably good condition. This and a low stock price made TCRT a real plum for someone like Green who cared only about, as he put it, "making a fast buck." Green mapped out a strategy that called for packing the board with directors of his choosing, ousting the old management, then cutting expenses and improvements to pay out fat dividends to shareholders simply to

drive up the stock price. At some point, Green calculated he would sell his shares at a nice profit for himself.

At the March 1949 annual meeting Green went after D. J. Strouse and the old management but lacked the votes and was rebuffed. Undaunted, he sought out local allies and found them in Fred Ossanna, an important attorney and a one-time candidate for Mayor of Minneapolis. Ossanna was joined by one of his clients, Isadore Blumenfeld, an infamous bootlegger and racketeer turned legitimate businessman and TCRT shareholder.

TCRT was losing money in 1949. A fare increase from 11 to 12 cents failed to offset increased expenses and ridership declines were putting even

more pressure on revenues. TCRT would lose some \$800,000 in 1949. These losses were all Green needed to convince shareholders it was time for change and by November 1949 he had enough proxies to force the resignation of Strouse and the old board. Green became president and Ossanna was appointed legal counsel.

Green didn't waste any time putting his plans to work. He had no choice. He had promised a turnaround and he had to deliver on that promise. Something had to be done to stop the red ink. The Minnesota Railroad and Warehouse Commission and the cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul had no jurisdiction over maintenance so Green

On May 26, 1954, John Seidl, president of the TCRT employee's union, shakes hands with TCRT president Fred Ossanna after inspecting the new driver's room created inside the former Snelling erecting shop. Left to right are Ossanna, TCRT general manager Benson (Barney) Larrick, TCRT St. Paul superintendent of operations Ray Anderson, Seidl, TCRT superintendent of equipment Frank Morgan and union recording secretary Nels Bolstad.

St. Paul Pioneer Press photo.





Stored streetcars sit out the winter of 1953-54 at Snelling Station.

ordered immediate and across the board cutbacks on repairs to track, the power system and rolling stock. TCRT's renowned car rehabilitation program was discontinued. Some 800 employees were laid off. Next he went after schedules, cutting rush hour trippers-anything and everything to reduce car and bus miles. Turning to management he retained the firm of Booz Allen and Hamilton to develop a plan to streamline the organization and reduce management and supervisory employment.

Green's heavy-handed tactics won him no friends. Complaints poured in from the public about poor service and crowded cars. Reduced maintenance resulted in derailments and power outages. But Green offered no explanations or apologies. Criticism just made him mad. This alarmed Ossanna and his associates. They had

The Minnesota Railfans Association chartered cars 1300 and 1775 for a last tour of the remaining trackage on June 19, 1954, the day after service ended. The trip terminated at Snelling Station, where the trolley fans began stripping streetcars of whatever they could carry. Although it might have seemed uncivilized at the time, the result was a supply of useful artifacts that has helped MSM restore its preserved cars.



other things on their minds and Green's behavior and his public statements were creating far too much controversy. Green had to go.

War

On May 12, 1950 the board stripped Green of his authority to speak for the company. All statements would now come from Ossanna as legal counsel. Shortly thereafter, Bigham D. Eblen, a Detroit attorney, offered to arrange a buyout of Green's shares at an estimate \$100,000 profit to Green. Eblen claimed the buyers were friends of his from Detroit when in fact they were associates of Tommy Banks another Twin Cities underworld character with connections to Ossanna and Blumenfeld. Green became enraged on learning this and made a series of damaging disclosures to Emil Lindquist, then chairman of the Minnesota Railroad and Warehouse Commission. Lindquist in turn persuaded other members of the commission to launch a full blown investigation into TCRT's affairs. Ossanna had earlier threatened Lindquist that he would shut down all Twin Cities transit service unless the commission granted the company a fare increase from 12 to 15 cents. This threat and other statements by Ossanna-one being that Chairman Lindquist was a cheap politician-caused the TCRT executive committee which was controlled by Green directors to fire Ossanna as spokesman and legal counsel.

For the next eight months Green and Ossanna battled for control of the company. Meanwhile the Minnesota Railroad and Warehouse Commission continued its investigation, joined by the Kefauver Crime Committee, the Ramsey County Grand Jury, the Federal Securities and Exchange Commission, and the New York Stock Exchange. Charges flew back and forth

that over 25 percent of TCRT stock was in the hands of organized crime. The Hennepin County Grand Jury indicted Ossanna on perjury charges for denying that he had backed a scheme to set up a slush fund to bribe local officials. Governor Youngdahl, alarmed at these developments, tried to persuade the legislature to appoint a special committee to investigate TCRT. The House approved, but the Senate killed the bill and the legislature subsequently adjourned without taking any action. Green alleged that Ossanna wanted to use company funds to bribe employees to spy on and betray the union during labor negotiations. Green went along with it after Ossanna insisted that, "This is the way we do business around here." There were threats of physical violence. Green hired bodyguards and took to carrying a pistol. Chairman Lindquist and his family received threatening phone calls. Two men kidnapped a commission witness at gunpoint and took him to a lonely spot in the country where he was threatened with death. The witness managed to get away but his assailants fired shots at him.

But then things started going Ossanna's way. The investigations turned up nothing substantive and District Court Judge Levi Hall dismissed the Ossanna indictment for insufficient evidence. At the annual meeting on March 12th, 1951, Ossanna took control, voting 192,000 shares against Green's 73,000. Ossanna became chairman of the board and legal council. Emil Aslesen was elected president, a position he held until Ossanna took over the presidency a few months later.

Farewell to the streetcar

Ossanna wanted to move fast. He and his silent partners needed to get rid of the streetcars to realize their objectives of personal profit, but there was no money

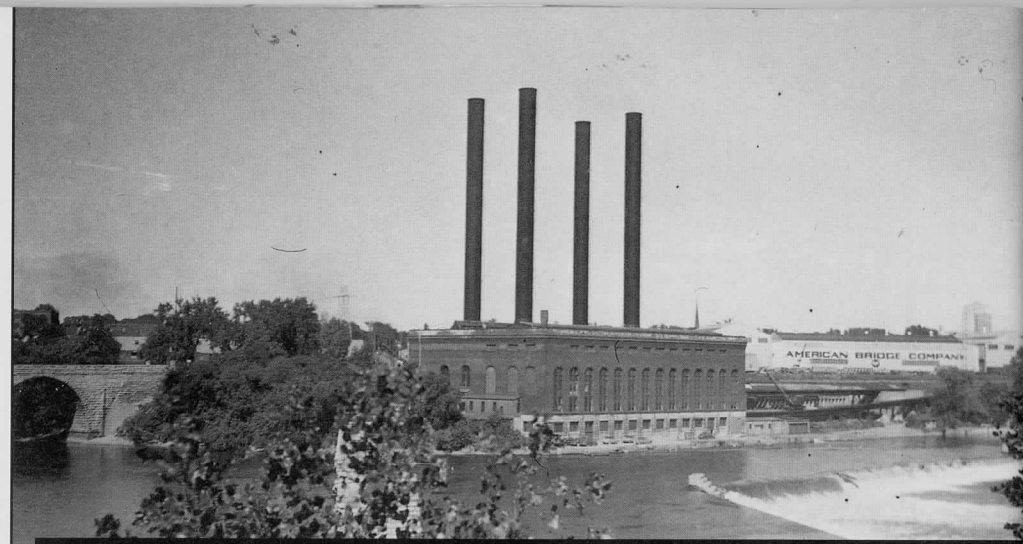
to buy new equipment. The company by now was in very poor shape, and local banks, leery of its management and the company's weak financial position, were unwilling to finance new buses. Ossanna, however, found a willing banker in General Motors, which through its finance arm, General Motors Acceptance Corporation, provided funds for 525 new buses.

There was much to do, and Ossanna needed an expert to manage the job. TCRT had some of the best transit management people in the industry, but Ossanna thought of them as old guard types who lacked the necessary ruthlessness to do what had to be done. He didn't trust them. Instead he turned to Barney Larrick who had performed similar conversions for National City Lines in Los Angeles. Larrick became General Manager.

The plan that emerged called for a complete conversion over a span of about two years. The St. Paul lines would disappear first. They were the weakest performers in the system. That and St. Paul traffic officials were anxious to put in a system of one-way streets downtown.

At the end of conversion, management envisioned a total fleet of approximately 700 buses with all operations consolidated at: Nicollet (275 buses) Northside (275 buses) and Snelling (250 buses). Bus overhaul work: engine and transmission, brake, and paint and body would be performed at a central repair shop at Snelling. The Nicollet, North Side and the Snelling operating garages would fuel, clean, perform mileage inspections, do running repairs and tire work.

TCRT was operating buses from the Duluth Avenue Station in St. Paul, and Lake Street, Nicollet, and North Side Stations in Minneapolis along with the Number 1 Garage in downtown Minneapolis, the Number 2 Garage in downtown St. Paul and suburban



The Main Steam Station, seen from both east and west, was sold in 1954 to Northern States Power Co.



garages in White Bear Lake and Excelsior. After conversion only Nicollet, North Side, and Snelling would remain. All other operating divisions, rail and bus, including the Duluth Avenue Station in St. Paul and the East Side and Lake Street stations in Minneapolis, along with the Number 1 bus garage in downtown Minneapolis and the Number 2 bus garage in downtown St. Paul and suburban

satellite garages in Excelsior and White Bear Lake, would close. Buildings and facilities not needed for bus operation, including the Snelling carhouse and streetcar repair shops at Snelling and University, would be demolished and the real estate sold.

The Main Steam Station, the Lower Dam Water Power Station and the Hennepin Island Water Power Station would be sold to Northern States



Above: The PCC cars began to disappear in late 1953. First to go were 30 to Newark, New Jersey. Unlike the sales to Mexico City and Shaker Heights, the Newark cars were simply shipped and painted in New Jersey. Two of them have arrived at the Plank Road Shops.

Left: The last PCCs to leave the property were 20 for Shaker Heights Rapid Transit in Cleveland. Fifteen of them were modified for multiple unit operation. This is TCRT #351, soon to be pushed to the Milwaukee Road interchange by work motor #15. TCRT photo, MSM collection.



Power Company. The power system, AC feeders, substations, DC trolley system, and related equipment would be scrapped.

All tracks on private right-of-way would be removed and scrapped. Track in streets would be removed subject to repaving agreements with the respective cities. All streetcar rolling stock would be scrapped. PCC's would be sold.

To make this happen operating expenses had to be reduced. Otherwise, the company risked insolvency, before it could complete its conversion plans. The cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul regulated TCRT's schedules and service levels. Any change in scheduled service would have required city concurrence, but TCRT operated a large number of unscheduled extra cars and buses (trippers) during rush hours to relieve crowding. Squeezing more people on fewer cars and buses by eliminating these trippers would bring complaints about poor service, but it was the easiest and fastest way to cut expenses. Acting on July 2, 1951, in what could be called a Saturday night massacre, 124 morning and evening, rush hour trippers were permanently dropped from the schedules. The few remaining conductor jobs on Selby-Lake, Nicollet, Chicago, Como-Harriet, and Interurban lines were also eliminated, but union objections over displacement of senior people forced some of them back. The operating and schedule departments were directed to look for and eliminate all unproductive mileage, even if it meant inconveniencing customers. The information bureau was closed after 6 PM and on weekends.

Maintenance on rail, rolling stock and track and power systems was reduced to the barest of minimums. All streetcar repairs ceased once buses began arriving and streetcars became surplus. Bad order cars were simply set aside for scrapping. Only emergency repairs were allowed to track and power systems. (As an aside, the company was forced to complete a major track relocation project on Wabasha Street as part of the state capitol beautification program. Eighteen months later it would be abandoned (See story on page 19).)

Management recognized that it had to work with Local 1005 of the Amalgamated Transit Workers Union to make the conversion go smoothly.



In 1953 Nicollet Station was converted to buses. The rails have been pulled from the yard, and extensive bus storage bays are being added onto the back of the station building. The rails remained in the shop floor, and for the rest of Nicollet Garage's existence they carried the names 1 Track, 2 Track, etc.



Seniority lists would be merged. Streetcar trainmen would be retrained as bus operators. Personnel in bargaining unit jobs in the track and power departments would be offered jobs in bus operations according to their seniority. As much as possible, the dismantling of the street railway infrastructure would be left to TCRT employees. Still, between December 1949 and February 1954 the number of TCRT bargaining unit employees declined from 3,449 to 1,880. These force reductions, sad as they were, kept the company from bankruptcy.

Getting it done

Two lines went to bus in 1950. They were the Broadway and the Cedar-28th Avenue lines in Minneapolis. Both were converted because of major bridge and street reconstruction. The first conversions in St. Paul and the start of the system-wide program began in November 1951 with the abandonment of the Mahtomedi line. This was followed in May 1952 with delivery of the first group of 125 GM Model 5103 buses, ending all rail operations at the Duluth Avenue station. Duluth would be kept open for bus operations until the following September when it and the Number 2 garage in downtown St. Paul would close, moving all operations in St. Paul to Snelling. (Table 3 compares car assignments in January 1952 just before the start of conversion and in August 1953 following conversion of the St. Paul lines)

At Snelling a major relocation project was underway to make room for the 250 buses that would have to be stored during the winter of 1952-53.

All streetcar related equipment and machinery was removed from the foundry, the steel shop and the mill and the buildings converted to temporary bus storage. The erecting shop had all of its equipment removed and was modified for bus repairs. Part

of the transfer table pit was filled in and the area around the shops paved with asphalt to accommodate the movement of buses. Even with these modifications it was necessary to park 64 buses outside that winter and equip them with a special heating system to keep them from freezing. Once this work was completed the only buildings in use for streetcar repairs were the carhouse and the general repair shop. The latter was used mainly to strip and de-truck the bodies of streetcars that would be offered for sale.

After November 1952 the only rail lines in St. Paul were the three intercity lines from Minneapolis: the Como-Harriet, the Selby-Lake and the Interurban with Snelling station serving only the interurban. PCC cars that had been assigned to St. Paul lines were shifted to Minneapolis and PCCs appeared on the Como-Harriet for the first time. In July 1953 the Selby-Lake and the St. Paul end of the Como-Harriet went to buses. In November 1953, with the conversion of the Interurban, Snelling station closed down. The carhouse would be used for preparing the PCCs for sale to Newark, Shaker Heights and Mexico City and the scrapping of the standard cars as the rest of the system was converted.

The dispatch office and trainmen's room-now a driver's room-stayed open. Buses were parked in the carhouse and in the other shop buildings, or outside in the yard.

Bus deliveries switched to Minneapolis once the St. Paul local lines were converted. The Ft. Snelling shuttle was abandoned and the Grand Avenue line went to buses in August and October of 1952, respectively, but the real changeover did not get underway in Minneapolis until February in 1953. Things moved rapidly after that.

Nicollet and North Side would be remodeled into bus garages, and that work got underway in April of 1953.



The erecting shop at Snelling became the office and maintenance shop for the new Snelling Garage. Here bus bays are being added onto the side of the building facing Snelling Avenue, and new shop doors are being inserted on the St. Anthony Avenue side. St. Paul Pioneer Press photos.



Neither would close down completely during the reconstruction. Instead, streetcar lines that were assigned to Nicollet and North Side were moved, temporarily, to East Side and Lake Street. Once conversion was completed these lines, as bus routes, would be moved back to Nicollet and/or North Side.

Scrapping the cars

The Strouse management began scrapping gate cars as the PCCs came in after World War II. During 1947-1949, 61 cars were scrapped. The gate cars that were left when the Green and Ossanna managements took over were used primarily on the Selby-Lake, Como-Harriet, Chicago-Penn-Fremont, and the Inter-Campus -lines that still had runs with conductors-and these, except for a few held at East Side for the Intercampus, would be scrapped in 1951 and 1952. Large scale scrapping of all car types got under way in 1952 once the St. Paul lines went to buses and Duluth station closed. The 2000 series lightweights and car 1230 and car number 4, the last two double-ended cars, were among those scrapped in 1952. No distinctions were made among wood sided or steel sided cars or the date of last rebuilding. Interestingly, when Duluth Station closed, most of its cars were shipped to North Side and North Side's went to Snelling for storage and eventual scrapping. After 1952, an accident or a major mechanical failure was a sure death sentence. Work equipment was treated similarly. Snelling and Lake Street stations were used for storing out of service cars awaiting disposal.

Some two hundred cars earned a reprieve and a new lease on life. Shorn of trucks and electrical equipment, their bodies were sold by the Transportation Sales Company for use as lake cabins or storage buildings.

At one point the scrapping program



Above: On June 1, 1954, carbodies sit at Snelling awaiting either sale or scrapping. Below: June 7, 1954. Carbodies are burned at Snelling to make salvage of remaining metal parts easier. St. Paul Pioneer Press photos.



got ahead of operational needs. A car shortage developed as the PCCs were withdrawn for reconditioning prior to their sale, and a number of stored cars had to be patched up and put back in service.

PCCs

All 141 PCCs were sold. Shaker Heights bought 20 (numbers 340-359 in January 1953), Newark, 30 (numbers 320-339, 360-364, 415-419 in March 1953) and the remaining 91 went to Mexico City (numbers 299, 365-414, 420-439 in August 1953). The first car shipped off the property was number 360 to Newark on August 4, 1953. The last PCC to run in the Twin Cities was 389 on Glenwood-4th Avenue on November 27, 1953. However, the last PCC's did not leave the property until May 1954.

Setbacks: things did not go completely as planned

Edina wanted to repave its half of France Avenue south of 44th Street, and TCRT's tracks were in the way. Never on good terms with the company, Edina arbitrarily removed a rail from France Avenue on August 11, 1952 cutting off all rail service on France Avenue and forcing the company to substitute a shuttle bus service from 54th Street to the loop at 44th and France. Then there was the City of Minneapolis. It wanted financial guarantees for street repaving. TCRT pleaded poverty. When negotiations failed, the City of Minneapolis went to court on July 8, 1953 to block conversion of the Chicago-Penn-Fremont and Selby Lake lines. The City wanted the company to post an \$850,000 performance bond for street repaving. A compromise was reached when TCRT agreed to run one streetcar per week on each line thereby officially keeping them as streetcar lines under the terms of its franchise, rather than bus routes which would come under the jurisdiction of the Railroad and Warehouse Commission.

The same issue came up in October. TCRT was ready to convert the Bryant-Johnson, Plymouth E. 25th St., and Ft. Snelling-Minnehaha lines on October 31, but the city passed an ordinance on October 30 demanding \$10,000 per mile for street paving. It also wanted the company to remove all loose rails and switches and turn over title to the Harriet right-of-way, which it proposed to turn into a parkway. Lacking agreement, conversion of these lines would be held up until a compromise was reached on November 28, 1953. This delay caused considerable confusion. Lake Street Station was set to close on October 31, and some of its cars had already been moved to Snelling for storage. Motormen had picked runs as bus drivers at Nicollet and North Side garages. Supervisors



Not all the rail remained in the streets. Special work at junctions was considered worth the cost to pull up. This is Snelling Avenue at Randolph, and 40th Ave. NE at 5th Street in Columbia Heights. St. Paul Pioneer Press photo.



were sent scrambling at the last minute to contact employees and alert them that the changeover was off. For the next several weeks Lake Street Station was kept open on a day to day basis—a situation made more difficult because all of its office fixtures, vending machines and employee lockers had been moved out. That and all of the streetcar spare parts had been trucked to a scrap dealer.

Then on February 15, 1954 an oversize truck ran under the 36th Street Bridge on the east side of Lake Calhoun, damaging it and cutting the Como-Harriet Line. TCRT began turning streetcars at Lake Street and scrambled to put in a bus shuttle south of there. The Nicollet Avenue and Glenwood-4th Ave. lines were scheduled to convert to buses in March and TCRT debated whether to fix the bridge and resume service or convert the Como-Harriet to buses, instead. It chose the former. Bus schedules and routings had not been finalized for the Como-Harriet and bridge repairs weren't as extensive as originally thought. Streetcar service resumed on February 25.

End of the line

Bus number 1399 arrived in June 1954 completing the GM order, permitting conversion of the Como-Harriet line on June 19. What followed was a cleanup operation. There were fifty cars left at East Side Station, and after last day ceremonies on June 18 and as cars pulled in from their final afternoon runs, shop men began moving them to Snelling. Those that were left moved to Snelling on the 19th—MSM's 1300 after a final fan trip on the remaining live trackage.

The following week crews moved to finish dismantling operations, which were nearly complete in St. Paul and well underway in Minneapolis. Wire car number 3 was dispatched to begin pulling up track on the Como-Harriet

right-of-way. When its work was completed it joined the other cars waiting their turn for scrapping at Snelling.

Power, which was being supplied by the Hennepin Island Water Power Station, was left on until July 2 to allow final work at the Snelling Shops. All generating facilities were then turned over to Northern States Power Company, which had purchased the Main Steam Station and the hydro plants. The Snelling yards were cleared of cars by the end of August—except for bodies awaiting shipment by Transportation Sales Company. September found the yard tracks torn up and the wires down. Car number 1300 was the last car left on the property and it was moved on September 18th. The Snelling carhouse was still being used as driver's dispatch office, but its days were numbered as work had started on new garage and office facilities in the former erecting shop. A storage garage went up on the site of the transfer table, wrapping around the former carpenter shop and a bus overhaul shop built east of the erecting shop in 1950. By the spring of 1955 these facilities were in use and the rest of the shop buildings were empty shells awaiting demolition. The company had sold the 37 acres where they stood for redevelopment as a shopping center.

Afterword

This story doesn't have a happy ending for TCRT employees, for transit, or for those who championed the \$15,000,000 conversion program. When it was all over, some 1,600 employees in the equipment maintenance, power, and track departments were gone. Many retired after years of service. A few in the power department found jobs with Northern States Power Company. Some came back as stockroom employees, building maintenance workers, or even bus drivers.

Even though it expanded its suburban service to Richfield, Bloomington and Edina in 1955-57, TCRT's ridership kept right on tumbling, from 86 million passengers in 1954 to 74 million in 1957. Despite all the promises of modernization and efficiency, schedule speeds declined. The diesel buses lacked the acceleration capabilities of the PCCs, and they were just as vulnerable, if not more so, to automobile traffic snarls as the streetcars that they replaced. People complained about the smell of the diesel exhaust, the noise, and rough ride. They were also less reliable than the streetcars as the number of miles operated between road failures went down. The bus was a cheaper vehicle, but it was also an inferior vehicle compared to the streetcar, and it was proving itself less attractive to a public that was growing increasingly indifferent to transit.

Fred Ossanna and his colleagues can take credit for a highly successful conversion program, which, however despised by streetcar aficionados, did save TCRT from financial ruin. It was an inevitable unpleasant task, but by 1950 there were no options. If it had not been Fred Ossanna, it would have been someone else. Ossanna cannot be blamed for doing what any other transit manager would have done. His crime was doing it to enrich himself. He lost, and so did the employees of TCRT, its shareholders, and the cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul.

Car Assignments at Stations January 1, 1952

	Gatecars	One/Two Man	PCC's	Lightweights	Double-enders	Totals
Northside	15	78	0	0	0	93
East Side	17	104	13	0	0	134
Nicollet	0	83	51	0	0	134
Lake Street	26	117	0	11	2	156
Snelling	13	64	66	12	0	155
Duluth	0	70	11	5	0	86
Totals	71	516	141	28	2	758

Car Assignments August 4, 1953

	Snelling Shops	Snelling	Lake Street	East Side
Cars Available for Service	38	88	135	
Cars Scheduled	34	73	119	
Cars Stored			135	
Awaiting Scrap			30	
Total Cars	165	38	88	135
Total Active Cars: 261				

These tables depict the speed with which the Ossanna management worked. The upper one shows the cars assigned to stations just before the conversion program got underway. All types of equipment are still represented and there are 758 streetcars available for service. The lower table shows the situation 20 months later. St. Paul, with the exception of the Interurban, is now all bus. Duluth Station is closed and Nicollet and North Side are bus garages. There are 261 streetcars in service and 165 at Snelling awaiting scrap or sale as car bodies. Two or three gate cars are left and all of the lightweights and the double-end cars have been scrapped. All of the PCCs have been sold and are being withdrawn from service. One year later the system will be all bus and all of the cars will be scrapped.

Revenue Per Car Mile by Lines 1943 {Cents per Mile}

Streetcars		Buses	
68.1	Interurban	34.2	E. 25th Street.
61.1	Glenwood-4th Ave	32.0	Snelling Ave.
58.3	Selby-Lake	29.9	Broadway
56.8	Nicollet 2nd St:		
51.9	Oak Harriet	53.7	Nic-Henn
50.9	Chicago-Penn-Fremont:	43.8	Franklin
50.4	Como-Harriet	36.6	Glen Lake-Excelsior
49.8	Dale-Forest	36.4	Kenwood
49.6	Hamline-Cherokee	36.0	Jackson-So. St. Paul
47.9	Bryant-Johnson	34.3	White Bear
47.4	Rice-So. St. Paul	30.8	Stillwater-E. 6th St.
46.1	Bloomington-Col. Hts.	30.3	38th St.
46.1	Grand-Mississippi	28.4	Kenwood
45.5	St. Clair-Payne	27.4	Bryn-Mawr
45.5	Rondo-Stryker	26.9	Lowry
44.3	Randolph-Mahtomedi	22.1	Western Ave.
42.8	28th Ave. So.-Robb.	22.0	Highland Park
40.5	Mhaha-Ply-Ft. Snelling	17.9	Chicago extension
37.3	34th Ave	14.5	West 39th St
36.6	Ft. Snelling-Maria	14.1	Humboldt Ave.
		13.9	Dale-Hoyt

TCRT was raking in revenues during World War II. With operating costs of .28 per mile for streetcars and .20 for buses, all of the car lines were in the black. Strangely, the only money losers were four bus routes-all of them shuttles or feeders to one of the car lines. Just six years later the company lost \$800,000 on its operations. Eleven years later all of the streetcars would be gone. *Source: Gilman Report*

Conversion

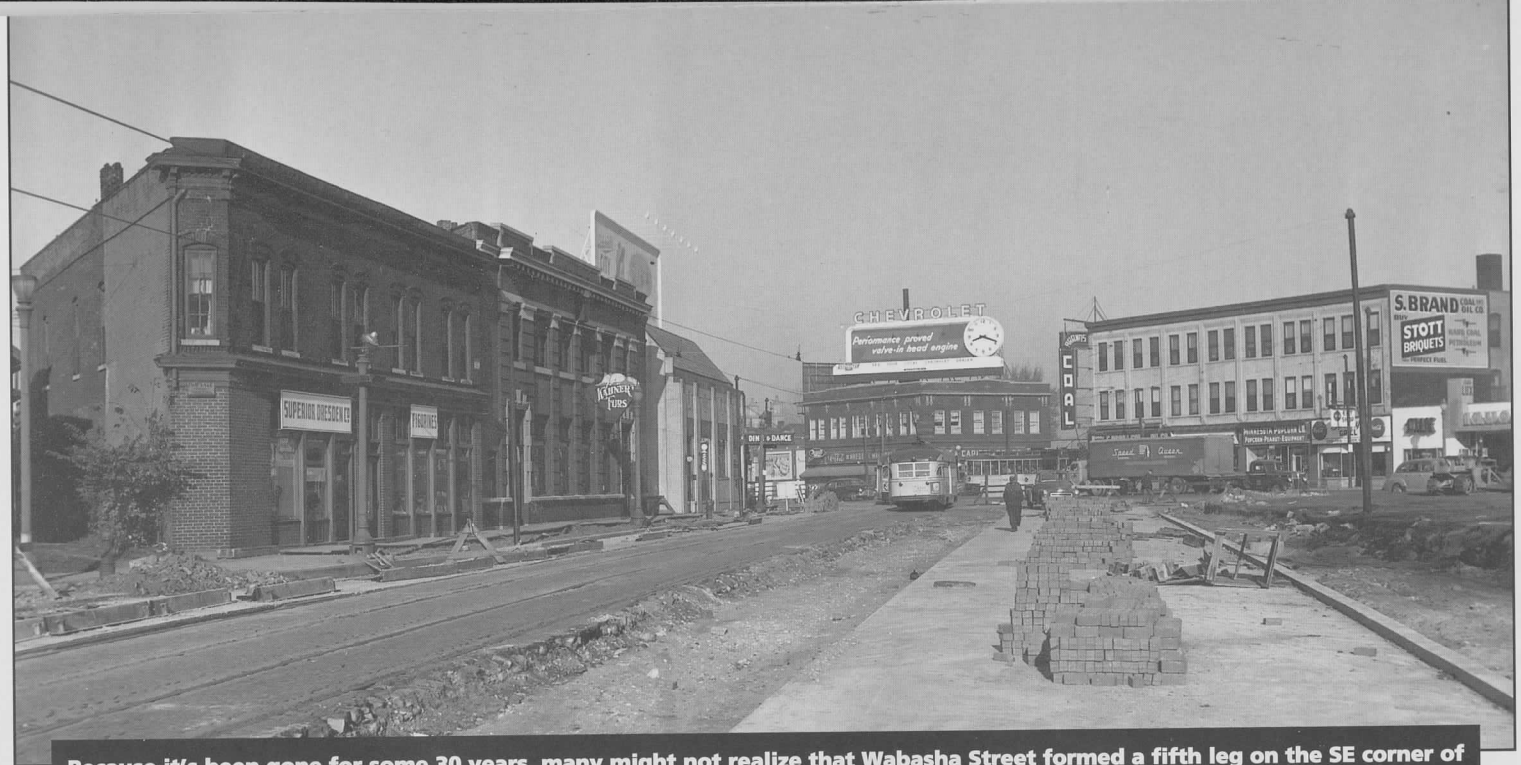
Dates	St. Paul Lines
11/3/51	E. 7th St.-Mahtomedi
5/3/52	Dale Street
5/17/52	Randolph-Hazel Park
	Rice Street-South St. Paul
	Fort Snelling-Maria
9/6/52	St. Clair-Payne Avenue
	Snelling Avenue
11/1/52	Hamline-Cherokee
	Grand-Mississippi
7/11/53	Como Avenue
	Selby Avenue
10/31/53	University Avenue
	(St. Paul leg of St. Paul-Minneapolis)
Minneapolis Lines	
4/16/50	Broadway
8/19/50	Cedar-28th Ave. So.
8/1/52	Ft. Snelling Shuttle
10/18/52	Grand Avenue South
2/21/53	Bloomington-Columbia Heights
4/18/53	N. Washington Ave.
	34th Avenue
7/11/53	Chicago-Penn Fremont
	Selby-Lake
11/28/53	University Avenue
	(Minneapolis leg of St. Paul-Minneapolis)
	Bryant-Johnson
	Ft. Snelling-Minnehaha
	Plymouth-E. 25th St.
3/6/54	Glenwood-4th Ave. S.
3/27/54	Nicollet-2nd St. N. E.-Monroe
6/19/54	Como-Oak-Harriet
	Inter-Campus

THE STATE CAPITOL LINE RELOCATION

In 1952 the lawns in front of the state capitol were doubled in size. Previously they had ended at Wabasha Street, which cut a NW-SE diagonal, and at Central Avenue, the first street down the hill towards downtown. The new grounds extended beyond Central two blocks to 12th Street, replacing a deteriorated residential neighborhood. Wabasha, along with its streetcar tracks, was removed between its intersections with Central and Park Avenue. It was replaced by a new street that made a sweeping curve from the north-south alignment of Park to the east-west alignment of Wabasha. Two new streetcar stops were created on Park in front of the State Office Building, and on Central just west of Wabasha. Both featured a pair of bull-nosed safety islands for waiting passengers.

The realigned street and track opened for service in mid-1952. They were used by the St. Paul-Minneapolis interurban, Como-Harriet and Hamline-Cherokee. The Rice Street-South St. Paul line had been abandoned in May 1952, prior to the street relocation. By the end of 1952, Hamline-Cherokee was gone and the other two lines followed by November 1, 1953. The new track had been in service only 18 months before seeing its last streetcar.

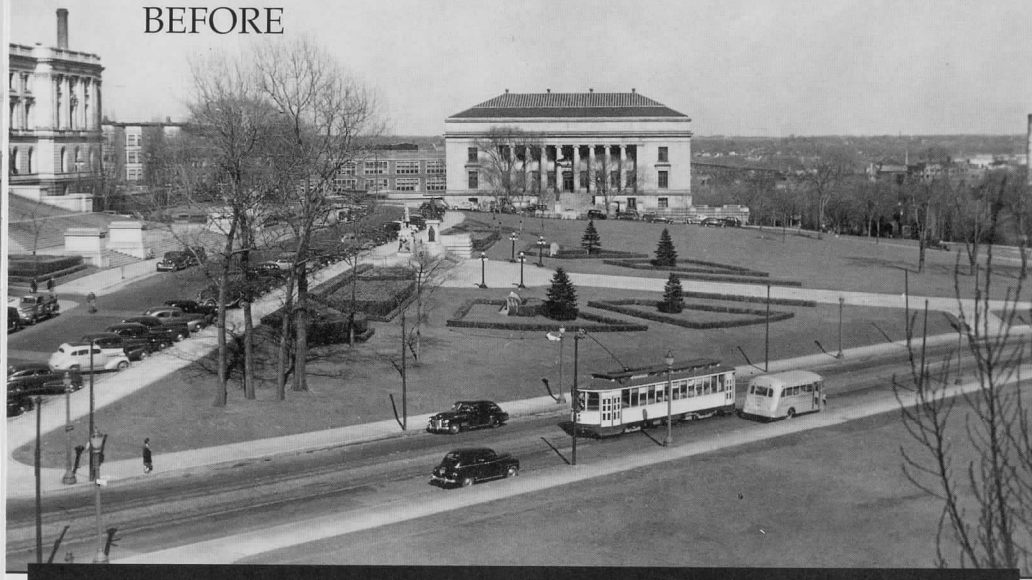
As a footnote, Wabasha Street from Rice to Park and from Central to 12th Street was removed in the 1970s and 80s. Central Avenue was renamed Constitution and later renamed for Martin Luther King, and still carries heavy bus traffic.



Because it's been gone for some 30 years, many might not realize that Wabasha Street formed a fifth leg on the SE corner of the Rice and University intersection. In 1951, Wabasha is being rebuilt as part of the larger capitol grounds expansion. St. Paul Pioneer Press photo, Minnesota Historical Society collection.
With less than two months of service left, an Interurban boards on Wabasha as one of the new buses passes.
Arthur Rusterholz photo.



BEFORE



Before the capitol grounds expansion, Wabasha cut a diagonal from Park Avenue to Central Avenue. In the lower photo, construction has begun. Central Avenue is at bottom. Both St. Paul Pioneer Press photos, Minnesota Historical Society collection.



Both photos were taken from the roof of the State Office Building. The top photo is 1937, showing the melted remains of a Winter Carnival ice palace. Minneapolis Star-Tribune photo. The bottom one is December 29, 1949, showing utility work that preceded the capitol grounds expansion. St. Paul Pioneer Press photo, both Minnesota Historical Society collection.

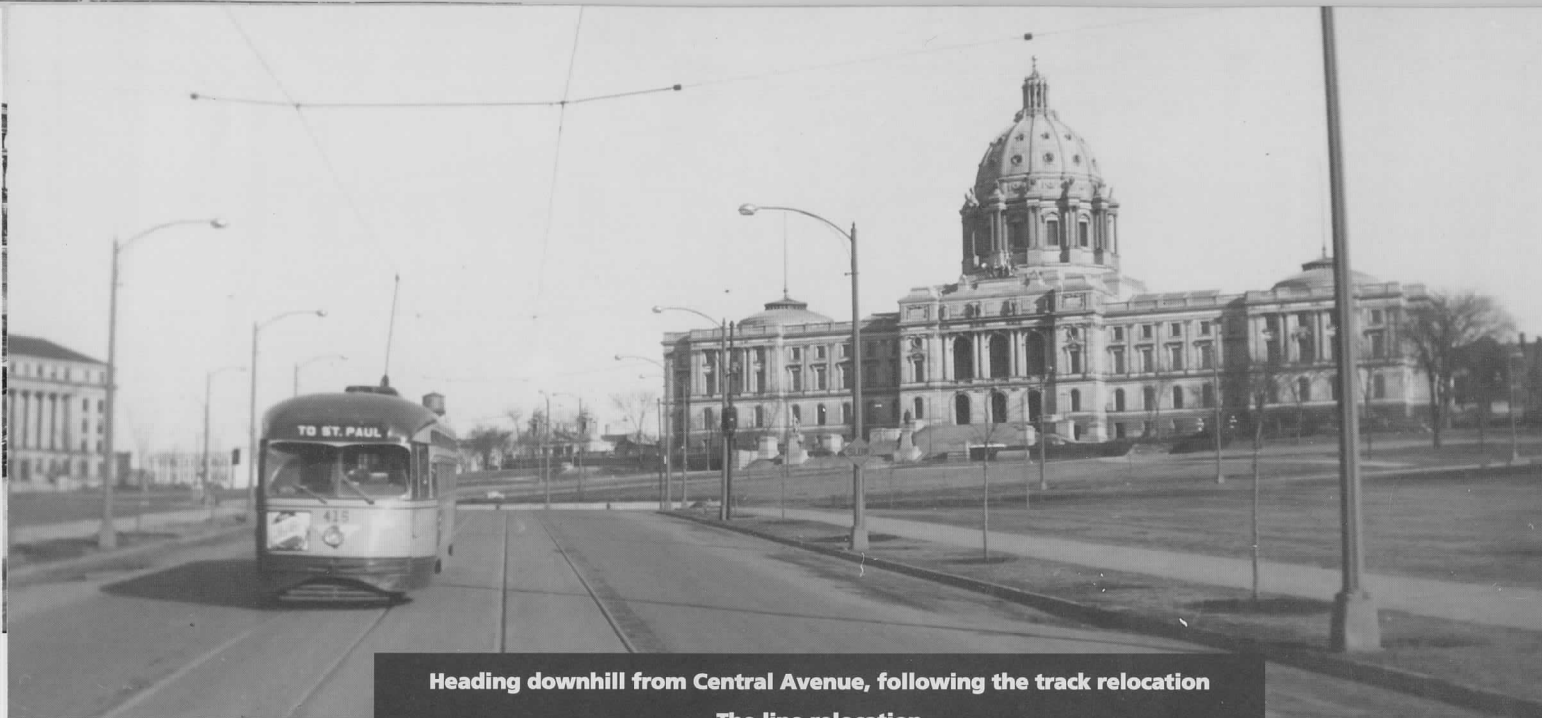


AFTER

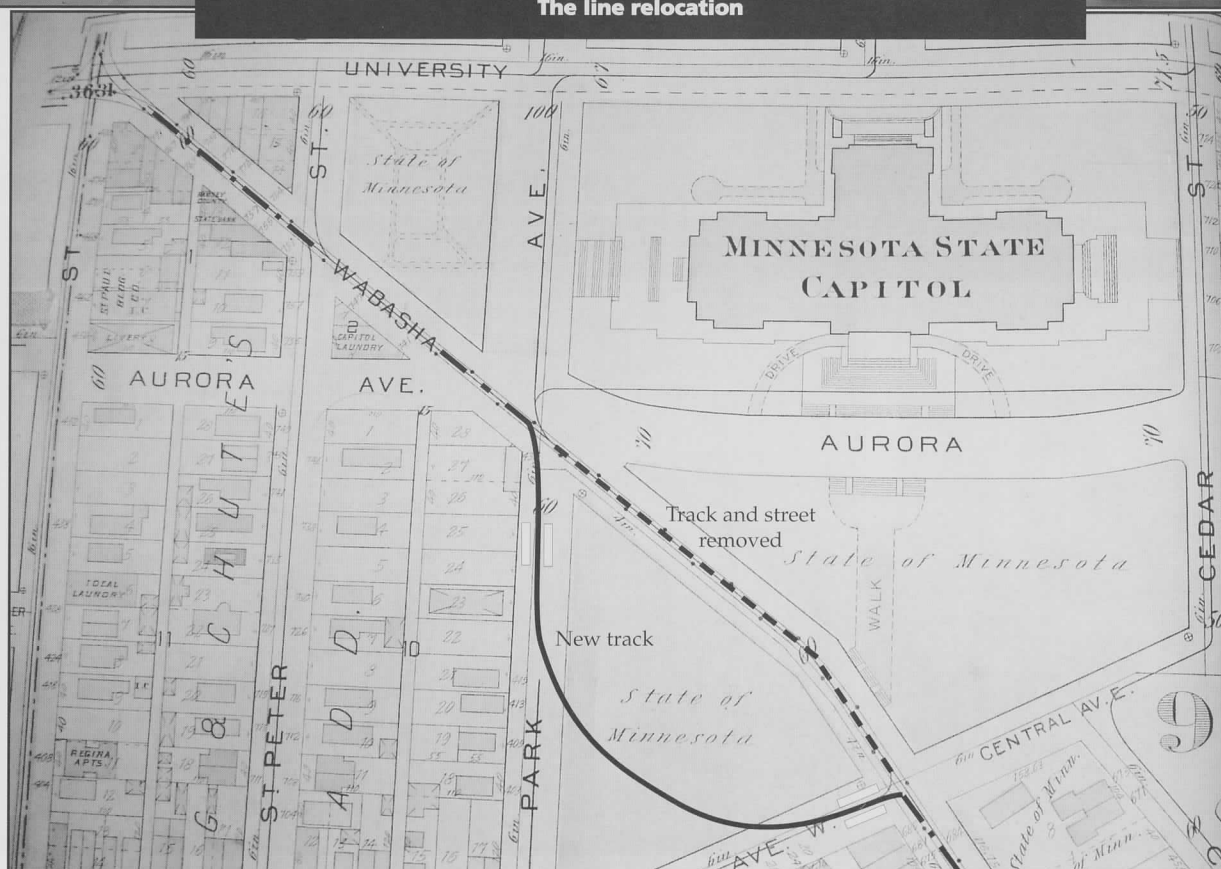


This sequence shows the relocated track, starting at the new safety island stop in front of the State Office Building, then around the new curve and stopped at the new safety islands on Central. Contrast the track angle relative to the capitol with the photo on page 20.





Heading downhill from Central Avenue, following the track relocation
The line relocation



Inside rear cover: On October 19, 1953, TCRT Superintendent of Power and Electrical Equipment Frank Morgan (left) shakes hands with Arthur Neuman, his Mexico City counterpart. Snelling Shops has painted PCC #405 green and cream, in preparation for its trip south. St. Paul Pioneer Press photo, MSM collection.

Rear cover: In 1953, Snelling Station and Shops was in the midst of conversion. The station yard is still full of streetcars, but buses surround the shop buildings and the transfer table pit has been half filled. Vir Keljik photo.



